

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 PRS-01 USIA-04

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 A-01 EA-13 IO-03 PM-03

DODE-00 DRC-01 (ISO) W

----- 012148

R 031034Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5855

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0077

LIMDI*

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: FIR*T LEBANESE PRESS ATTACKS ON AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE GODLEY

1. TWO BEIRUT PUBLICATIONS, INDEPENDENT WEEKLY AL USBU' AL 'ARABI AND LEFTIST DAILY AL YOUM, ON DEC. 31 CARRIED ARTICLES (EXCERPTS GIVEN BELOW) CRITICIZING AMBASSADOR GODLEY'S APPOINTMENT TO BEIRUT ON GROUNDS THAT HIS "TARNISHED PAST" AS COUNTER-INSURGENCY EXPERT BOD*S IL* FOR LEBANON'S INTERNAL STABILITY IN GENERAL AND LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS IN PARTICULAR. AL YOUM WENT SO FAR AS TO DEMAND THAT GOL WITHDRAW ITS AGREEMENT TO GODLEY'S APPOINTMENT, WHICH IF DESCRIBED AS AN "OBVIOUS PROVOCATION".

2. IN ADDITION TO THESE TWO ARTICLES, WHICH WE BELIEVE MAY HERALD START OF MORE BROADLY GAUGED ATTACK ON GODLEY'S APPOINTMENT BY LEBANESE LEFT, WE HAVE BEGUN TO PICK UP SIMILAR MURMURINGS AMONG OTHER LOCAL OPPOSITION PERSONALITIES (NEWSMEN AND POLITICIANS ALIKE) WHO ARE PREDICTABLY ALERT FOR ANY OPPORTUNITY TO EMBARRASS OR CREATE DIFFICULTIES FOR GOL. LURID TALES OF AMBASSADOR GODLEY'S PAST, COMBINED WITH REHEASHED "BIG LIE" STORIES OF THIS EMBASSY'S ALLEGED ROLE IN PAST ATTACKS ON FEDAYEEN IN LEBANON, CAN THEREFORE BE EXPECTED TO GAIN WIDER CIRCULATION HERE IN DAYS AHEAD (FBIS M022035). WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT IN AND O* THEMSELVES THEY WILL DO MORE THAN TITILLATE A LEBANESE
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PUBLIC OPINION ALREADY SATURATED WITH SENSATIONALISM AND RUMOR-

MONGERING.

3. AL USBU'AL"ARABI STORY, CITING LEBANESE FOREGIN MINI*TRY AS*SOURCE, DESCRIBED*AMBASSADOR GODLEY AS *ONE OF AMERICA'S BEST

COUNTER-*NSURGENCY EXPERTS, HA*ING USED HIS EXPERTISE ON WIDEST SCALE*AS AMBASSADOR IN LAOS WHERE HE SUPERVISED PLANS FOR COMBATTING AND ATTACKING LAOTIAN REVOLUTIONARIES". GODLEY'S "TARNISHED PAST", SAID USBU', IS CAUSING STRONG ANXIETY IN OFFICIAL LEBANESE CIRCLES, WHO FEAR HE "MAY HAVE A SPECIFIC MISSION CONNECTED WITH FUTURE OF FEDAYEEN IN LEBANON AFTER PEACE ACCORDS ARE SIGNED AT GENEVA". MAGAZINE CLAIMED GOL AUTHORITIES "HAVE ARRANGED THINGS SO THAT CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE WOULD SOLVE PROBLE OF ARMED PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON PEACEFULLY AND AMICABLY....WITH ENDANGERING NATIONAL UNITY". IT CONCLUDED THERE IS FEAR THAT ARRIVAL OF THIS COUNTER-INSURGENCY EXPERT IN BEIRUT IS RELATED TO AMERICAN AND ISRAELI OPPOSITION TO THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE. THIS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY MEAN--IN EVENT PLO IS EXCLUDED FROM SUCCESSFUL PEACE CONFERENCE AT GENEVA--ARMED EXPLOSION IN LEBANON BETWEEN GOL AND FEDAYEEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PLAN PERHAPS BEING PREPARED BY CIA AT THIS VERY MOMENT".

4. AL YOUM, IN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "REJECT GODLEY'S NOMINATION", ALSO DWELT ON AMBASSADOR'S "UGLY ROLE" IN LAOS, WHERE IT SAID HE WAS NICKNAMED "THE COLONEL" AND USED TO BOAST TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS ABOUT HIS ROLE IN "BOMBING PEACEFUL CITIES AND ENCOURAGING EXCESSES COMMITTED BY US MILITARY ADVISERS". YOUM SNIFFED THAT ALTHOUGH THESE QUALITIES HAD DISQUALIFIED GODLEY FROM HIGH-LEVEL POST IN WASHINGTON, "THEY APPEAR NOT TO DISQUALIFY HIM FROM BECOMING AMBASSADOR TO LEBANON, WHICH LEADS ONE TO ASSUME HE IS BEING

SENT HERE FOR A V RY SPECIFIC PURPOSE. TERMING GODLEY'S APPOINTMENT AN "OBVIOUS AND EXPLICIT PROVOCATION" AND WARNING THAT FOLLOWING HES ARRIV*L BEIRU WOULD BECOME "CENTER FOR ACTIVITIES THAT GO BEYOND MERE DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION", PAPER DEMANDED THAT GOL WITHDRAW ITS AGREEMENT TO HIS NOMINATION. "LEBANESE PEOPLE", IT CONCLUDED " WILL NOT ACCEPT REPETITION OF EVENTS OF APRIL AND MAY AND OF CRIMINAL ATTEMPTS TO WEAKEN LEBANESE-PALE*STINIAN SO*IDARITY". BUFFUM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BEIRUT00077
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740165/aaaacjhl.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 JUN 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <19 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FIR*T LEBANESE PRESS ATTACKS ON AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE GODLEY
TAGS: PFOR, LE, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005